

**DRAFT MINUTES
MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM (SFF)**

13:00 – 14:00, 16 December 2021

Virtual Teams Meeting

Present: John Dennis (Chairperson), Neerasha Singh, Hayley King, David Meades, Phil Sayer, Marie Woolston, Michael Powis, Sue Beauchamp, Annabel Lilley, Richard Rule, Jenny Ashley-Jones, David Whitehead, Sarah Beaney, David Anderson, Kate Le Page, Mark Seymour.

Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director), Mark Walker (Director of SEND), Karen Stone (Business Partner), Chris Scott (Schools, High Needs & Early Years Manager), Robin Goldsmith (Clerk).

Apologies: Shellina Prendergast (Cabinet Member), Sue Chandler (Cabinet Member), Mark Tomkins (Vice Chairperson), Emma Bradshaw, Steve Avis, David Gleed, Ben Cooper, Tracey McCartney, Céranne Litton, David Stanley, Shelley Furlong.

Guest: Kerry Greene SEND Strategic Lead, Christy Holden – Head of Commissioning (Childrens).

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| 1. | <p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed and thanked members for attending this exceptional Schools' Funding Forum. He explained that the meeting needed to be held this side of Christmas to meet the timetable needed for it to go to Cabinet in early January with our comments clear.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS)</p> <p>Christy Holden presented the findings of the consultation.</p> <p>The Forum were shown a summary presentation of the consultation for the STLS service and were asked for their views on the following recommendations and Finance proposals.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Extend the existing STLS district Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for five months (April to August 2021, inclusive), and new three-year dynamic SLAs to be fully implemented from September 20222. Improved strategic governance and monitoring of the SLAs as part of the wider Children and Young People Outcomes Framework knitting together the SEND Strategy, the priorities set out in the Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education (CATIE) and the STLS Key Performance Indicators.3. Implement proposals for a consistent countywide tiered model of access to specialist advice, support and interventions from September 2022, including Drop-in clinics, Solution focussed Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) Meetings, | |

Intensive Specialist Support to model specialist interventions and strategies, and allocation of a named Link Teacher to settings and schools as a single point of contact.

4. Implement proposals for STLS to focus on targeted and specialist level Training. This work will be linked to the development of the Kent Directory of Resources.
5. STLS to offer the opportunity for chargeable bespoke training where a need is identified which cannot be met through the existing Kent training offer.
6. Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND by ensuring that all Specialist Teachers have access to an equitable programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and that they have or be willing to work towards accredited qualifications in an area of SEND or membership of relevant national professional bodies.
7. Incorporate the voice of parents/carers as equal partners in design, development and monitoring of specialist training for parents/carers of children and young people with SEND, and in service design, identification of gaps, evaluation and improvement.
8. Ensure greater transparency and accountability as part of annual financial audit to ensure resources are targeted and outcome driven.
9. Extend the Physical Disability and Sensory SLAs for 17 months commencing April 2022, with the intention to work through the consultation responses to plan and manage the next steps to create a fully integrated inhouse provision.
10. The Kent Association of the Blind Habilitation Service Grant to be extended in line with the Sensory STLS provision, with a full review of the service in the interim period.

Finance Proposals:

1. Current budget to be maintained £8.5m (including £0.3m pension grant)
2. The budget for District based SLAs will be maintained at existing levels for the first year whilst alternative funding models are considered to ensure resources are distributed equitably across the county. Also provides time to manage any resulting change.
3. A consistent method for charging overheads by SLA holding schools will be co-produced with Special Schools.
4. Annual financial review to be completed.
5. Separate Process to consider cost pressure in line with outcomes.

David Whitehead this is a service highly valued by the schools and if this service wasn't in place, we would have untold issues with levels of SEND. My concern is for financial reasons these proposals look to be very short term and my fear is this is a dismantling of the STLS service by stealth. Matt Dunkley responded: there are a number of things we need to achieve with this investment. First, we know the schools like and support this service, secondly, there must be a relationship between this intervention and the strategic aims of both the authority and the Schools Funding Forum.

Kerry Greene also acknowledged this was a valued service, and that we needed to focus on building a consistent service that is outcomes led which will help to instil confidence in our parents.

Annabel Lilley wanted to question the financial proposal for this service and whether the £8.2m is the actual current level of funding for this service. Karen Stone confirmed the £8.2m is the current level (Core and Outreach), and there is also £300k of pension funding so £8.5m in total. Annabel Lilley noted this service has not seen an uplift for ten years and we want the service to do more and provide an enhanced service with more CPD. Same money, more requirements, and more training for our staff. What is being proposed here is a reduction in the service.

Mike Powis this is a good service, a bit patchy in parts and that is dependent on who you get so I would support the recommendations around professionalism and qualifications, but this will add to costs. If we want this service to get more children into mainstream, don't we need more of it?

Sue Beauchamp we are all in agreement that we need to reduce the number of children with EHCP's. Is there going to be an expectation that spending this money will help to reduce requests for EHCP's going forward?

There were concerns the service was becoming accountable for reducing the number of EHCPs.

There were also concerns the outcomes specified for the service were not specific enough.

Matt Dunkley said we want the management of the service to orientate towards the goals and outcomes of supporting greater numbers of children in mainstream schools. The aim is to strengthen the practice of teachers to support this aim. It is recognised this service cannot be held solely responsible for reducing the number of EHCPs but its impact has to be considered as part of the overall impact of inclusion services. Further investment must be evidence-based, the new contract management arrangements will help to support future proposals.

Christine McInnes supported this position, highlighting to the SFF this was a significant investment in a service that other local authorities have chosen to delivery in alternative ways. There was a need to consider this in the context of other services that are about to be launched.

Sue Beauchamp asked whether the analysis of parental satisfaction, level of support and outcomes achieved including pathways of the child had been completed? Kerry confirmed this analysis had not yet taken place due to lack of historic contract management however, the second term of the new KPI arrangements had just taken place and future analysis will have a much greater focus on the outcomes and the impact of the service.

John Dennis said that when a large portion of the responses come from one area, he would expect to see a sensitivity analysis. Do we understand what has happen in Thanet and Sittingbourne which led to a higher rate of response? What are we losing by not going to an area-based model? Christy Holden agreed to provide a further sensitivity analysis. Kerry Greene noted that in Thanet and Sittingbourne the LIFT executive sent additional emails out to make sure schools were well informed, therefore this may have had an impact. Although it was also acknowledged they also had the highest levels of deprivation. In terms of area working, the Council does not see this as a massive barrier. Practice could be threaded into the district service level agreements.

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| | <p>Annabel Lilley said that it seems clear the recommendations for the service had come out of the review, but asked where the financial recommendations had come from? Matt Dunkley said that in terms of the Terms of Reference we weren't asked to deduce if this service needs more money and with regards to the massive deficit we have, if we were to ask for more money we are not sure where this would come from. We have costed up a service based on the financial envelope we have.</p> <p>John Dennis noted that in the past, we have agreed if we needed to spend more centrally in order to save money we would willingly review any proposal the authority shared with us.</p> <p>Mike Powis is there a link between the £10m transfer and this budget, what happens if the transfer is not agreed? Karen Stone said that, as it stands, this is funded out of the core High Needs budget which is currently £50m overspent. We would have to take a fundamental view how we take forward any proposal if the £10m is not agreed.</p> <p>Subject to the caveats and thoughts that the Forum has raised the forum broadly support the proposals that are going to cabinet.</p> | |
| | <p>Next provisional meeting dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 January 2021 | |